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ABSTRACT

Throughout 1993-94, a team of adult education practitioners and state staff from the Kentucky Department for Adult Education and Literacy developed a staff development system for adult educators in the state. Input was gathered from the staff development advisory committee, from student and teacher focus groups, and through other public and private agencies. Some of the project activities included the following: literature reviews, analysis of staff development reports from other states' adult education programs, consultation with staff development experts and researchers, visits with business and industry professionals, attendance at retreats, attendance at national training-related conferences, needs assessment, evaluation, determination of teacher competencies, and decision making about training content. A comprehensive plan was developed with detailed goals, strategies, and timelines. The plan includes these parts: the staff training mission; core values; six goals with key strategies enumerated for each goal; methods of staff development (study groups, focus groups, support groups and teacher networks, individual professional growth plans, action research, inquiry, mentoring, peer observation and coaching, program exchanges, as well as conferences, classes, and workshops); tools for staff development; and recommendations for the future for teachers, volunteers, tutors, program administrators, policymakers, and students. (Contains 12 references.) (KC)

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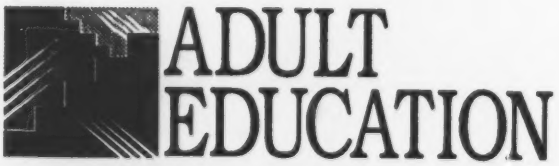
PROJECT STAFF:

Systematic Training Approach for the Future



Kentucky Department for Adult Education and Literacy
Frankfort, Kentucky

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Project STAFF: Systematic Training Approach for the Future

prepared by

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1994

Throughout 1993-94, a team of adult education practitioners and state staff from the Department for Adult Education and Literacy has been actively engaged in developing a staff development system for adult educators in Kentucky. Input was gathered from the staff development advisory committee, from student and teacher focus groups, and through other public and private agencies, all providing information for writing a long-range training plan for 1994-1998.

A comprehensive plan was developed with detailed goals, strategies, and timelines. This publication contains a brief summary of that plan. The following signatures affirm the commitment of the Kentucky State Board for Adult and Technical Education, the Workforce Development Cabinet, and the Department for Adult Education and Literacy.

Larry Stinson, Chairperson
Kentucky State Board for Adult and Technical Education

William D. Huston, Secretary
Workforce Development Cabinet

Teresa M. Suter, Commissioner
Department for Adult Education and Literacy

***

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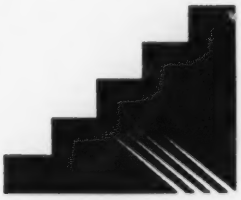


Background

In the fall of 1993, the Department for Adult Education and Literacy invited adult education practitioners to participate as members of a state staff development advisory committee. The goal of this committee was to design a practitioner-centered, comprehensive, long-range training plan for the continuous delivery of staff development to all Kentucky adult educators.

Committee members represented the diversity among adult educators in Kentucky and included teachers, program administrators, coordinators, paraprofessionals, volunteers, business and industry training professionals, state central office staff, and university faculty. The participants were from various geographic regions of the state, had varying levels of adult education experience, and possessed a strong knowledge of adult education practices.

The committee developed a vision of *a functional and innovative staff development system for adult education practitioners that would result in improved teacher performance and increased student outcomes.* On the basis of this vision, goals and strategies were sequentially outlined.

In order to construct the long-range staff development plan, committee members engaged in the following activities:

- reviewed current literature and research on effective staff development practices;
- examined staff development reports from other states' adult education programs;
- consulted with staff development experts and reseachers;
- consulted and visited with business and industry professionals;
- attended training relevant to effective staff development practices;
- attended retreats to discuss indepth philosophies, goals, methods, and expected outcomes of the staff development efforts; and
- attended national training-related conferences.

Subcommittees and task groups were formed to study further specific areas, such as needs assessment, evaluation, teacher competencies, and training content. In addition to studying specific areas of staff development, the committee actually used many of the techniques they recommended to produce innovative ideas for Kentucky.

The most unique aspect of Project STAFF was determining evaluation and measurement. The committee could find no models that measure the effects of staff development in an adult education setting.

The committee also struggled with other issues familar to adult educators such as low pay, teacher performance standards, quality indicators, measuring student outcomes, part-time employment, administrative support, and geographic and professional isolation. These are issues which require resolutions through the efforts of policy makers at all levels.

It is hoped that the broad focus of this long-range plan will impact these issues at the practitioner level and will yield a platform for further staff development efforts which are even more thorough, comprehensive, and effective.

For purposes of this project, the Kentucky Department for Adult Education and Literacy defines practitioners as:

> *. . . teachers, volunteer tutors, paraprofessionals, classroom aides, program administrators, literacy coordinators, learning center coordinators, planners, and specialists.*

Mission

To design and implement a practitioner-centered staff development system that enables adult educators to strengthen existing knowledge, skills, and abilities to assist learners in meeting academic, social, and personal goals.

Core Values

. . . we believe that effective staff development is:

- ✓ Practitioner driven
- ✓ Results oriented
- ✓ Essential for achieving the purposes of the organization.

Goals

- Goal 1: Develop and Implement a Needs Assessment Process
- Goal 2: Design an Ongoing Evaluation Process
- Goal 3: Establish Performance Indicators
- Goal 4: Design a Practitioner-Centered, Long-Range Training Plan
- Goal 5: Provide a Flexible Process for the Continuous Delivery of Staff Development
- Goal 6: Support and Reinforce Training Efforts

GOAL 1
Develop and Implement a Needs Assessment Process

KEY STRATEGIES

- Identify professional competencies that result in student learning.
- Conduct statewide survey to identify concerns which can be translated into staff development.
- Disseminate needs assessment findings to practitioners.
- Utilize other methods of assessment such as teacher focus groups, student focus groups, and telephone surveys.
- Encourage local programs to utilize needs assessment process.

GOAL 2
Design an Ongoing Evaluation Process

KEY STRATEGIES

- Assess training needs on a periodic basis.
- Select evaluation methods appropriate for the training learning environment, content, and participants.
- Assemble training measurement instruments such as questionnaires, attitude surveys, interviews, and observations.
- Establish adult education standards for staff development and training outcomes.
- Form practitioner review teams to analyze training data and determine implications.
- Utilize practitioner study groups and peer trainers to revise training content and method.
- Develop a system to measure the effects of adjusted training processes.

GOAL 3
Establish Performance Indicators

KEY STRATEGIES

- Collect practitioner demographic data.
- Collect data on student learning outcomes, student retention, and student satisfaction.
- Collect program data from *Quality Indicators*.
- Measure participant *reactions* to training programs.
- Measure participant *learning* from training programs.
- Measure participants' *use* of new knowledge and skills.
- Establish adult education standards of training outcomes.
- Calculate training costs/benefits.

GOAL 4

Design a Practitioner-Centered, Long-Range Training Plan

KEY STRATEGIES

- Validate training concerns by establishing practitioner study groups.
- Design and recommend training curriculum.
- Establish staff development policy and procedures to facilitate local training.
- Assist local programs to develop training plans.
- Train practitioners to develop personal goals within the context of program goals through the use of *Individual Professional Development Plans*.
- Develop an adult education Practitioner Self-Evaluation Manual.
- Establish quality control methods for training projects.

GOAL 5
Provide a Flexible Process for the Continuous Delivery of Staff Development

KEY STRATEGIES

- Identify research-based innovative instructional approaches to staff development.
- Establish a service delivery system that includes a state of the art training facility, teleconferencing, and electronic communication link.
- Promote staff development methods such as peer coaching, mentoring, staff exchanges, study groups, action research, inquiry-based staff development and teacher networks.
- Give staff development incentive grants for local site-based training.
- Provide area staff development grants to encourage regional training.
- Award staff development grants for statewide training efforts and conferences.
- Establish regional professional development coordinators to promote and coordinate training opportunities within a region.

GOAL 6
Support and Reinforce Training Efforts

KEY STRATEGIES

- Develop a credentials process based on professional competencies.
- Provide paid professional development time and release time for staff.
- Provide leadership/management training for adult education administrators.
- Utilize the Center for Adult Education and Literacy to collect and disseminate professional materials.
- Involve adult education practitioners in collaborations, networks, and partnerships.
- Develop a recognition and reward program for effective staff development.
- Encourage participation in professional organizations.

Methods of Staff Development

A variety of approaches may be used to help adult education practitioners acquire the job-related knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed. The STAFF Committee recommends that all staff development trainings provide opportunities for incorporating new techniques.

■ Group-Guided Staff Development:

✓*Study Groups*

A small group of four to six practitioners working together on a regular basis to read, discuss, and study a topic they choose in order to implement new practices for the benefit of the students. The group engages in the pursuit of pertinent questions and problems. Participants collect information, document, and discuss their findings with each other.

✓*Focus Groups*

Typically, a small group of practitioners or students, guided by a facilitator, expresses opinions, attitudes, and brainstorms new ideas or specific topics. The group of fewer than 20 people come together to "focus" on a particular issue. Comments are generally recorded and distributed to participants.

✓*Support Groups/Teacher Networks*

Teachers and/or volunteers in the same region or area meet together regularly to support specific training initiatives. The group shares ideas, experiences, and outcomes and formulates possible solutions.

■ Individually-Guided Staff Development:

✓Individual Professional Growth Plans

Adult education practitioners develop individual goals within the context of larger program goals. Administrators evaluate the professional growth plans on a regular and timely basis as indicators of support.

✓Action Research

A powerful tool for creating change. A type of collegial investigation in which an individual or group of instructors identify a problem that arises out of their instructional practice. Action research may document existing "best practices" or test out a new classroom procedure. Participants collect information, document their findings, and share the information with others in order to put new ideas into practice. The action research could be part of college credit if done with a higher education institution.

✓Inquiry

A range of approaches to adult learning that purposefully builds on the richness and diversity of real-world experiences and knowledge that teachers, tutors, volunteers, and administrators currently bring to the field. Inquiry-based staff development positions practitioners as learners, researchers, and reformers. Practitioners formulate questions about their own practices in adult education. They conduct systematic and intentional inquiries into teaching and learning in their own program settings and use this information to construct new knowledge.

■ Observation and Feedback:

✓Mentoring

An experienced teacher or volunteer is paired with a less experienced teacher or volunteer in similar programs. The mentor serves as a role model, helper, resource person, guide, and advisor.

Mentoring may be a formal or informal relationship with regularly scheduled meetings to focus on specific topics.

✓Peer Observations/Coaching

Teachers/volunteers observe other instructors' classrooms and provide feedback. A colleague observes and gives feedback to the practitioner or volunteer being observed. Opportunities for analysis and reflection on professional practice are available in this format. This process may be especially helpful in training new instructors.

✓Program Exchanges

Programs may exchange teachers or visit other programs. The visitors observe classes, talk with program staff and students, learn about the other's program goals, strengths and challenges. Programs may work together to solve problems held in common or design ways to share resources. The visitors will bring new ideas and gain new ideas.

■ Training:

✓Workshops, Classes, Institutes, Conferences

Expert presenters select objectives, learning activities, and outcomes; the improvement of teachers' skills being critical. The most effective training includes demonstration of practice, exploration of theory, and supervised treatment of new skill with feedback. Training should increase professionalism, reflective thought, and participation in planning and facilitation of training.

✓*Follow-up Training*

A professional development activity that occurs 30-60 days *after* initial training. Follow-up should provide practice, feedback and support enabling participants to focus on new skills, processes and impact on students. Options for follow-up activities include: mentorship, peer coaching, collegial support groups, study groups, and/or refresher workshops.

✓*New Staff Orientation*

Pre-service training for new practitioners that addresses the knowledge, skills, and competencies relevant to adult educators. Training includes adult learning theory, orientation to the Mission of Adult Education in Kentucky, assessment and student intake procedures, teaching strategies, and materials overview.

■ Tools for Staff Development:

✓*Technology*

The use of technology allows individuals or small groups to create staff development opportunities to meet their unique needs. Technology includes video tapes, electronic networking services, electronic mail to connect teachers with colleagues, teleconferencing, and interactive television.

✓*Training Grants*

Incentive grants enable programs to design and implement site-based training that emphasizes a needs driven model with follow-up. Area grants focus on regional collaboration that provides innovative training for practitioners. Statewide grants address training needs for entire state.

✓*Practitioners as Trainers*

Practitioners may participate in train-the-trainer activities that will enable them to conduct training for their peers. Activities include observations, co-presentations, primary presentations, and finally solo presentations. These trained practitioners will be listed in a training directory.

Key Recommendations for the Future

For successful implementation of this staff development system to occur, we recommend to the following persons:

■ Teachers, Volunteers, Tutors

- ✓ Actively engage in the learning process
- ✓ Continually reflect on personal practice to make new discoveries
- ✓ Mentor and share resources with other teachers
- ✓ Share, collaborate, and contribute

■ Program Administrators

- ✓ Support and encourage practitioners' learning
- ✓ Develop ways to reward practitioners for their staff development efforts
- ✓ Engage in learning with practitioners and show evidence of continued professional development
- ✓ Value the process of professional development

■ Policy Makers

- ✓ Develop policy which will allow programs to be more flexible in their staff development activities
- ✓ Provide a mechanism to create professionalism in the adult education field
- ✓ Provide funding for full-time adult educators

■ Students

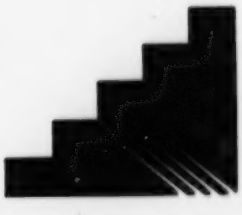
- ✓ Demonstrate commitment to adult education classes/programs
- ✓ Share experiences about learning with others
- ✓ Advocate adult education in the community

Endnotes

This document represents a staff development *process*. The committee realizes that activities within the Department for Adult Education and Literacy will affect this training plan. Those activities include:

- Kentucky Competency-Based Curriculum Project
- Teacher Credentials and Competency Study
- Performance Measurement Reporting and Improvement System (PMRIS)
- Technology/Distance Learning
- Kentucky Adult Literacy Survey (KALS)
- Federal Initiatives

. . . an unexpected by-product of this development process has been that adult education practitioners across the state of Kentucky are beginning to believe their concerns are being recognized and responded to. Their enthusiasm mirrors the enthusiasm of the staff development committee members, who have given such a high level of commitment and energy to make this plan a reality.



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